

SPORTS BALL WITH SEQUENCE INDICIA

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The subject invention relates to sporting goods, and more specifically to sporting goods having instructive indicia disposed on the goods themselves for instructing people in the use of the goods.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] By now skilled artisans in the field of sporting goods have recognized the benefit of very simple indicia disposed on the sporting goods to provide some instruction as to the use of the goods. In some cases the indicia interferes with the normal use of the sporting good, so that it may not be enjoyed except in the limited context of instruction. This happens, for example, when there are raised portions on the surface of a baseball to teach proper finger placement for certain types of pitches. See United States Patent 3,110,494. There are also cases where a golf club grip includes raised portions to teach proper hand placements – as in United States Patent 1,664,257. In either case, the sporting good cannot easily be used except for instruction. In certain other cases the indicia does not interfere with the normal enjoyment of the sport, as in the case where there are simple drawings of preferred hand placements on a ball.

[0003] Indicating proper hand placement is helpful; but it is possible and desirable to provide even more instruction to a person in the various uses of a sporting good. For example, a person may also need to know proper foot

positioning, body orientation, and distribution of weight while handling the sporting good. A person may also need to know how to shift weight during certain activities like passing, shooting, or kicking a ball.

[0004] Of course, these skills can be taught with a personal trainer or coach. But sometimes these people are not available, and in any case people often learn and practice skills by themselves. Printed materials such as books may be available to teach these skills when a coach or instructor is not. But then again, maybe these materials are not available, or they are difficult or inconvenient to use because of the nature of a particular sport – especially an outdoor sport where instructional materials can blow away or get damaged.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION AND ADVANTAGES

[0005] According to one conception of the invention, there is a sporting good comprising indicia disposed thereon including at least one figure demonstrating an action to take with the sporting good. The figure is shown in a sequence of positions representing the action whereby a person can view the indicia, and learn and practice the action.

[0006] According to another conception of the invention, there is a method for instructing a person in the use of a sports ball including the steps of: imprinting upon the ball indicia including a figure shown in a sequence of positions, and demonstrating with the sequence an action to take with the ball whereby a person can practice the action.

[0007] With this invention, people can obtain significant instruction with the use of a sporting good simply by having the sporting good itself. There is no need to have a coach or a book on hand to learn and practice common skills. Also, the sporting good can be used in the context of instruction, or it can be used in a normal way for its intended use, because the instructive indicia on the good does not interfere in any way with the normal use of the good.

FIGURES IN THE DRAWINGS

[0008] The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0009] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a person holding a sporting good and observing the indicia on it;

[0010] Figures 2A and 2B show a basketball with indicia showing passing, dribbling, and shooting;

[0011] Figures 2C-2E show a basketball with hand placement indicia;

[0012] Figures 3A-3C show a football with indicia showing catching, passing, and kicking;

[0013] Figures 3D-3E show a football with hand placement indicia;

[0014] Figures 4A-4C show a large playground ball with indicia showing passing, kicking, and dribbling;

[0015] Figures 5A-5C show a small playground ball with indicia showing throwing and catching;

[0016] Figures 6A-6B show a soccer ball with indicia showing kicking;

[0017] Figures 6C-6F show a soccer ball with strike indicia;

[0018] Figures 7A-7F show a volleyball with indicia showing serving, blocking, spiking, digging, and passing;

[0019] Figures 7G-7M show a volleyball with indicia showing strike indicia; and

[0020] Figure 8 shows catching indicia for use on a variety of balls.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0021] The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which a sporting good with instructive indicia is generally shown at 10. The sporting good 10 is preferably a ball, although it will occur to persons of skill in the art after reading this disclosure that the invention can involve a variety of sporting goods. As shown in the figures, the ball 10 can be a basketball 12, a football 14, a large playground ball 15, a small playground ball 16, a soccer ball 17, or a volley ball 18.

[0022] The ball 10 includes sequence indicia generally shown at 20 disposed thereon having at least one figure 22 demonstrating an action to take with the sporting good. The figure 22 is shown in a sequence of positions representing consecutive stages of the action whereby a person can view the indicia 20, and learn and practice the action. Said another

way, the sequence indicia 20 can be disposed on the ball in a series – i.e. with a number of similar figures 22 arranged in a row or otherwise coming one after the other. Preferably, the sequences include three and four positions, but the sequences can have as few as two positions and more than four positions.

[0023] The figure 22 is preferably shown as a detailed drawing of a person, but it could be a photograph, a stick figure, or any representation that suitably represents the action. Preferably, the representation includes arms and legs.

[0024] The sequence indicia 20 includes secondary indicia 24 showing how to distribute and transfer weight during the action. As shown in the Figures, the secondary indicia 24 preferably includes light shading in each leg to indicate that weight is distributed more or less evenly, and dark shading to indicate primary distribution – i.e. that most or all weight is supported by one leg. As shown in the figures, the dark shading indicates that most or all of the weight is heavily distributed in one part of the body – e.g. a leg. This could show a push-off or a follow-through, for example. The absence of any shading indicates that there is little or no weight distribution in the leg. The light shading in each leg shows that the weight is more or less evenly distributed. Given these teachings, people of skill in the art will appreciate that other indicia may be used for showing weight distribution and how weight shifts from one side of the body to the other

during an athletic movement.

[0025] The action that may be taught with the invention may be passing the ball, kicking the ball, dribbling the ball, catching the ball, or throwing the ball. A variety of actions including these and others are shown in the figures. Persons skilled in the art will be able to take these teachings and apply them to many more actions for many more sporting goods.

[0026] The ball may include a legend 26 explaining the shading. The specific legend 26 may be used, or any similar legend to express the same concept may also be used. The ball may also include a legend 28 explaining or describing the action.

[0027] The sporting good may further including hand placement indicia generally shown at 30 disposed on the good indicating desired hand placements on the sporting good for handling the sporting good. Appropriate hand placement indicia for a basketball is shown in Figures 2C, 2D, and 2E. Appropriate hand placement indicia for a football is shown in Figure 3D and 3E.

[0028] Generally, the hand placement indicia 30 indicates proper hand placement for a person's hands for effecting a release of the ball. The guide includes a first image of a release hand 32 including a representation of the hand's palm and fingers. The representation of the palm has indicia 34 indicating that, except for the pads 45 referred to below, the person's

palm should not touch the ball. The representation of the fingers has another indicia generally shown at 36 indicating that the person should release the ball with the three middle fingers of the release hand. The representation of the fingers also has an indicia 38 indicating that one of the middle fingers should be the last of the three middle fingers touching the ball at the end of the release.

[0029] The term “release” means the action of forcing the ball out of the hand in the context of some sporting activity. In football, the release is a passing or snapping of the ball, for example. In basketball, the release can be shooting, passing, or dribbling the ball, for example.

[0030] The indicia 36 includes markings 40 disposed on the representation of the three middle fingers, and a legend 42 explaining the markings. The markings 40 are colored circles disposed at the tips of the three middle fingers. But any coloring, shading, or other marking may suffice. The legend 42 shown in the figures says, “3-Tip Release Points,” but similar variations could also communicate the concept that the tips of the three middle fingers are important in handling and releasing the ball.

[0031] On a basketball, the indicia 38 includes a marking on the representation of the middle finger, possibly supplemented by a legend 43 explaining the marking. The marking 38 is a star in the colored circle 40 in the middle finger, though variations on the marking could suffice. The legend 43 shown in the figures says, “Feel the Middle Last,” though other

similar legends could be used, as long as they communicate the concept that the person should release the ball in a manner where the tip of the middle finger is the last part of the hand to contact the ball before the release. This is shown in Figures 2C and 2D.

[0032] On a football, the indicia 38 includes a star on the representation of the index finger, possibly supplemented by a legend 43 explaining the marking. In this case, the legend 43 shown in the figures says, “Feel the Index Last.” This is shown in Figures 3D and 3E.

[0033] The representation of the fingers may also include indicia generally shown at 41 indicating that the person should control the ball with the tips and pads of the fingers. The pad of the finger is the portion at the base of the finger adjacent the palm. The pads are indicated in the figures with oval indicia 45 at the base of each finger, and the oval indicia 45 are part of the indicia 41. The indicia 41 may also include the legend 44 saying “Pad & Tip Control” or the like, possibly supplemented with the arrows as shown. The purpose of this indicia 41 is to teach that the person should control the ball 10 while holding and releasing it primarily with the tips and pads of the fingers – though the rest of the fingers are in contact with the ball. The finger “tips” referred to herein are broadly construed to mean the last segment of the finger, and not necessarily the tip of this last segment.

[0034] In one version of the ball 10 having the hand placement indicia, shown in Figures 3D and 3E, the ball 10 is a football 14 and the

representation of the fingers contacts the lacing of the football. In another embodiment, shown in Figures 2C, 2D, and 2E, the ball 10 is a round ball such as a basketball 12; and the round ball further includes a second image of a guide hand 46, the second image being spaced apart from the image of the first hand. Figure 2C shows a right-handed release hand 32. But the typical ball would also include a left-handed release hand 32', and indeed this is shown in Figure 2D. The hand placement indicia can be used on other balls as well.

[0035] As shown in Figure 2E, the image of the guide hand 46 includes three middle fingers 48 and a universal finger 50 on each side of the three middle fingers, where each universal finger can be either a thumb or a pinkie finger. In this manner, the image of the guide hand 46 represents either a left hand or a right hand.

[0036] The sporting good may further include strike indicia generally shown at 60 disposed on the sporting good indicating a desired manner of striking the good. Examples of strike indicia are shown in Figures 6C through 6F in connection with a soccer ball; and in Figures 7G through 7M in connection with a volley ball. In the case of the soccer ball, the strike indicia 60 indicates the act of kicking the ball. Figure 6C shows that the strike indicia 60 can include further location indicia 62 indicating common places on the foot to strike the ball. The location indicia 62 includes arrows pointing to specific parts or areas of the foot, together with

associated legends identifying and explaining the parts. The legends can say “Instep Kick,” “Outside of Foot Kick,” “Inside of Foot Kick,” or the like. Figures 6D-6F showing larger views of a person kicking or “striking” the ball in the places identified with the location indicia 62 shown in Figure 6C. These larger views in Figures 6D-6F can include further explanatory legends 64 as shown therein, including: “Ankles Locked Toes Up,” and “Ankles Locked Toes Down.”

[0037] In the case of the volley ball, shown in Figures 7G-7M, the striking action is hitting, serving, sending, or passing the ball. The strike indicia 60 typically can include illustrations of different grips and hand orientations. The strike indicia 60 can also include explanatory legends or descriptions as shown.

[0038] As shown in Figure 8, the sporting good may further include catching indicia 70 indicating specific techniques for catching a sporting good such as a ball. The catching indicia 70 includes the illustrations of various arm and hand orientations, and possible descriptive or explanatory legends as shown. The catching indicia 70 can be used on a variety of balls such as footballs, basketballs, and playground balls.

[0039] The invention may also take the form of a method for using a ball having indicia disposed thereon, where the indicia includes a figure shown in a sequence of positions demonstrating an action to take with the ball. The method includes the steps of: observing the indicia; studying the

teachings of the indicia; and performing the action shown by the indicia. Figure 1 shows a child observing and studying the indicia on the ball. The child can then perform the actions shown in the sequence. The child can also make use of the other indicia on the ball, including any hand placement indicia, strike indicia, catching indicia, or any other instructional indicia.

[0040] The invention may also take the form of a method for instructing a person in the use of a sports ball. The method includes the steps of: imprinting upon the ball indicia including a figure shown in a sequence of positions, and demonstrating with the sequence an action to take with the ball whereby a person can practice the action. One could imprint any or all of the other indicia shown in the Figures. The imprinting step may involve any suitable method for imprinting known to persons of skill in the art, including silk screening.

[0041] The invention has been described in an illustrative manner, and it is to be understood that the terminology that has been used is intended to be in the nature of words of description rather than of limitation.

[0042] Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. Therefore, it is to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described. Moreover, the reference numerals are merely for convenience and are not intended to be in any way limiting.